

FIGHTING THE CAR INVASION...IN 1896

Posted on 27/07/2011 by Naider



I discover a curiosity on the blog [The Urban Country](#). As reflected in the photograph -the cover of the [San Francisco Call](#)- in 1896 thousands of protesters -100,000 people, according to the newspaper; that is [critical mass](#)- gathered to protest against what, already then , they considered an illegitimate and excessive invasion of an appliance that at that time was beginning to gain prominence in the streets, the car. Market Street, the main artery of the urban fabric of the Californian city and [currently under review](#), it suffered from growing excesses to make room for the car and protesters

demanding that it return to its previous design. Without a doubt, it will be one of the very first protests in favor of the bike and one of the first signs of the social perception of the massive arrival of private vehicles on the streets. All background information can be found at [The Great Bicycle Protest of 1896](#). A good story, no doubt.

The protest was not directed against the automobile as a priority. It had, above all, the objective of defending the very role of the bicycle as a vehicle of progress, since in the second part of the 19th century some cities in the United States discovered this means of transport and it quickly became popular. This rise had to find a place, actually, among other modes of transport prior to the generalization of the automobile, such as horse-drawn carriages or trams. The [Good Roads movement](#), under which the march in San Francisco was organized, he wanted to dignify the streets and make possible the increasingly diverse ways that occupied it. The march tried to influence the new municipal regulations that sought to corner the bicycle because its presence began to generate coexistence problems given its high level of use. More or less, it could be like today's rush hour in Copenhagen:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=FXw_t172BKY

Since then, an entire century has been dominated by the pre-eminence in favor of the car in urban design and the reservation of spaces in the city. The big mistake of [car-centric urban development](#), versus to the [current trend](#) that returns to look at the bicycle. And from Good Roads we have moved on to the [Complete Streets movement](#) as a formula to try to generate conditions of equality and balance between all of us who use the street to get around -or for any other use- whatever way we use.

You may also be interested in:

- [The expansion of the bicycle in Spanish cities](#)
- [Urban data display. London by taxi, bike and bus](#)
- [The future of cities. Bike-sharing](#)
- [Jan Gehl, the city of people. Janette Sadik-Khan, leadership to make it happen](#)
- [3-Way Street. A crossroads and small details](#)

There are no comments yet.